SPEED
Filmed in Omnimax by Greg MacGilivray.
Opens today at the Mugar Omni Theater,
Museum of Science, Science Park.
Continues through March.
$5 general, $3 seniors & children.

By PETER DUNN

Imagine the Blue Angels in the photograph at right. Now imagine experiencing them in full-color, projected on a huge, curved screen that is 76 feet in diameter and fills both the viewer's horizontal and vertical peripheral vision. The Omnimax film "Speed," which opens today at the Museum of Science, does just that and is certainly the best and most entertaining way to make your stomach queasy short of boarding a speeding race car or a roaring jet airplane.

On the surface "Speed" is a simple recount of the steps in man's ever-increasing rise in rapidity: from the bicycle to the car to the sound barrier to space and beyond. Greg MacGilivray's film could easily have fallen into a number of traps, but it didn't. The film might have been a dry documentary overlaid to spectacular on the huge Omnimax screen. MacGilivray might have fallen into the clichés of this genre of film, quickly boring the audience with repetitive, stomach-churning extravaganza.

But what raises "Speed" above the stereotype is MacGilivray's ability to evoke several emotions in exploring the scope of his subject matter: the humor as the audience watches a young Billy Vukovich, future Indianapolis 500 champion, hot-rod out of the reach of the police along the back roads of Fresno, California; the nostalgia as stock newsreel chronicles the quest to break the sound barrier; the majestic brilliance of jet powered drag racing. While the 33-minute long film is too short to amount to more than a mere overview of man's progress in precipitousness, MacGilivray does manage to instill the wonder and excitement.

"Speed" still contains some of the clichés - a ride on a rollercoaster, panoramic views from a sailplane - but MacGilivray manages to subdue the overemphasis on Omnimax, all-around-screen spectacle and instead concentrate on employing the effect to more subtle use, for example in changing the point of interest on the immense screen. The film's only failing is in its final segment where MacGilivray attempts to present a simulation of speed-of-light travel. This sequence has no basis in reality and too abruptly shifts the film from down-to-earth tauntability to speculative and uninteresting camera tricks. The sequence shows some promise in that it is the first attempt at special effects on the Omnimax screen (where the tolerance limits are far stricter than either 35 mm or 70 mm film because of the expansive projection size) but nevertheless hardly seems appropriate to Speed.

"New England Time Capsule" is also presented in conjunction with "Speed" and is a nice, 5-minute introduction to New England for those from out of town. "Time Capsule" relies more heavily on spectacle than does "Speed" but this seems more appropriate in a brief view of the panorama of New England.

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